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# Ó Domhnaill Abú

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES

## O Donnell Clan Newsletter No. 13

## Spring 1990

At the '89 Clan Gathering - L. to R. Count Gabriel of Austria, Brid Ni Dhomhnaill a niece of the late Cardinal O'Donnell, Margaret O'Donnell, Sr. B. O'Donnell and Count Hugh of Spain.

# NEWS

Shortly before Christmas I received a letter containing several O'Neill Clan newsletters from Kathleen Neill, editor of that publication. I hadn't been in touch with Kathleen since the O'Neill Clan Gathering in 1982 when Jorge O'Neill was inaugurated as the O'Neill of Clannabuidh. Alas! Jorge died in 1988 so plans are being made to have his son Hugo inaugurated at a Gathering in 1991. Indeed a special invitation to that event has been extended by Hugo to all O'Donnells. That Gathering will take place sometime in the second half of June, the precise dates will be announced later.

Kathleen is also editor of "Irish Heritage Links", a magazine(over 40 pages) dealing with Irish families and their origin along with other aspects of Irish life. Anyone interested in contacting Kathleen may do so at 162a Kingsway, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 9AD, Northern Ireland.

Kathleen and her husband have recently launched a new company, Tara Tapestries, producing do-it-yourself tapestry kits, depicting Irish coats of arms and some well-known scenes. The finished work measures 16"X16" with an inch border suitable for hanging or framing and costs about $60.

In the last few years, a great interest has developed in Clan Societies, Gatherings etc. Over sixteen Clan Gatherings are planned for 1990 including Brennan, Egan, Gormley, Killoran, Long, O'Byrne, O'Connor(Royal), O'Connor(Kerry), O'Dea, O'Doherty, O'Dowd, O'Driscoll, O'Mahony, O'Malley, McGettigan, Crawford and O'Rourke. The Irish Genealogical Office in Dublin has set up the " Clans of Ireland Office" to deal with this upsurge of interest. Bord Failte, the Irish Tourist Board, have also become aware of the interest, so much so that they have appointed Mary Nash to handle all matters to do with 'Roots' and tourism.

The Irish Family History Society was formed in 1984 to collect and make available information on Irish family history. As well as holding seminars, lectures, and assisting members with their research, the Society also publishes an annual journal(150 pages). Membership costs £8. The person to contact is John Kearney, Irish Family History Society, Charleville Rd.,Tullamore, Co. Offaly, Eire. Tel.:(0506)21421.

The 1989 issue(Vol. V) contains among other items, a list of the Irish people who emigrated to Canada and settled in Ontario and Quebec during the 19th. cent., a list of research centres in Ireland, reviews of useful books, a list of members and their queries.

Kathleen O'Donnell Kassimates (D 123) is President of the Greek Irish Society in Greece, while Patricia O'Donnell Lyle is President of the Irish Greek Society in Ireland.

It is with much regret we learn about the death of one of our earliest subscribers, Ann O'Donnell of 50 Golden st., W. Wyalong 2671, N.S.W., Australia. The subscription is being continued by her sister Johanna D122 of the same address.

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Postal rates have just been increased and subscriptions rates must suffer likewise. This does not concern those who have already subscribed.

Some people complain of receiving their copy of ODA in a rather crumpled condition and would like their newsletter mailed flat in an envelope. From now on this service will be available at an extra £1 per 4 issues.

So the new subscription rates are as follows -

Ireland & Britain (rolled).....£6.
Ireland & Britain (envelope).....£7.
All other countries (rolled).....£7.
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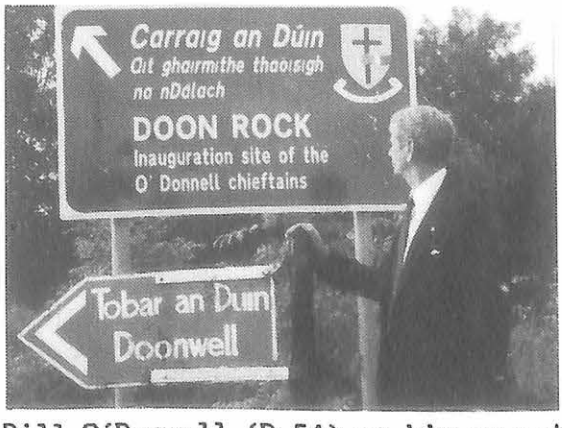



Bill O'Donnell (D 54) on his recent visit (Sept. '89) to Donegal.

# Francis 'Red' O'Donnell

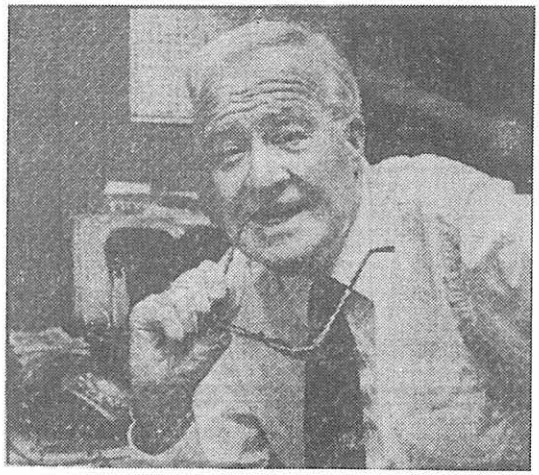
Among the list of members is William J. O'Donnell, D54 a pharmacist in Nashville, Tennessee, often visited by the well-known stars of Country and Western music. William's brother, Francis Xavier (better known as 'Red') was also a star but in a different field. For over fifty years he worked as a journalist, carving for himself a niche in the world of newspaper.

Born in Nashville in June 1911, the son of a locomotive engineer, Francis' first job was as a book-keeper with a biscuit company. At the age of twenty-one he joined 'The Tennessean' as a sports reporter. In 1943 he took leave to do his stint with the Marines in the Pacific, but even then he sent home regular dispatches from the front, full of the humour and the human interest that characterised his later life as a columnist. In 1946, Francis was discharged from the Marine Corps and on return to his hometown went back to work in his old job with the 'Tennessean'. In the years that followed he made quite a name for himself as an author of that paper's daily column 'Top o' the Morning' and later with the 'Nashville Banner' doing a column called 'Round the Clock'.

An authoritative local voice of the entertainment industry, he interviewed and was on first-name terms with many in the entertainment world. During a special reception and banquet held in his honour by members of the music, radio, T.V., film and newspaper world in 1979, present were ex-Beatle Paul McCartney, Tammy Wynette, Brenda Lee, Roy Acuff, Chet Atkins, Burt Reynolds, and telegrams were received from Elvis Presley, Elton John, John Wayne, Tom Jones and many others. During his life he received many awards, among them the 'Journalist of the Year Award' from the Country Music Association in 1984.

In February 1954, he and his wife Ebbie hosted a celebrity show on WMAK radio, and during the 60's he appeared as a regular on WSM-TV's Noon Show hosted by Jud Collins.

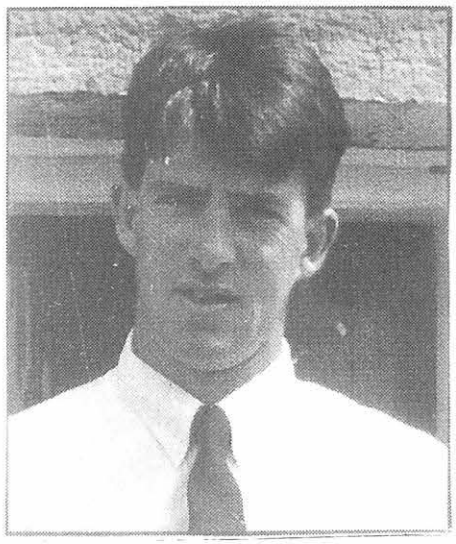
He was always known for his wit, charm and magnetic personality, and was truly gifted with words but even more gifted with people, and seemed to be on first-name terms with everyone and anyone, a gift which served him well in his profession as it opened many doors and made many 'scoops' possible.



Perhaps, the greatest tribute paid him was by the chairman of the 'Banner' when he called him a "wonderful human being".

Francis Xavier O'Donnell, or 'Red O'Donnell' as he was popularly known, died on the 3rd. Dec. 1984 at the age of 73. He is survived by his wife Elizabeth, daughter Diane Ozier, brothers William and John, and four grandchildren.

by V. O'Donnell.



SIMON O'DONNELL'S COMEBACK.

One of the great present-day heroes of Australian cricket is Simon O'Donnell who in 1987 played for the Australian team that beat India to win the World Cup. Shortly afterwards, he was diagnosed as having cancer of the rib cage. After a traumatic six months of chemotherapy and treatment during which time he lost all his hair and gained nineteen kilos, he made a full recovery and was back in play during the '88-'89 season being reinstated as Captain of Victoria and regaining his place on the Australian team.

# GODFREY O'DONNELL

## CHIEFTAIN 1248–'58

An extract from the talk given by Patsy O'Donnell at Conwal Graveyard during the 1989 Clan Gathering as mentioned in ODA No. 12.

Now let me dwell for a moment or two on the famous Godfrey O'Donnell. The well known sepulchral slab in this graveyard has always been regarded as Godfrey's gravestone. From time to time it has been on different locations within these surrounds. There is no valid reason for questioning the verdict of tradition. His castle consisted of clay and timber and probably stood nearby because the O'Donnells had not yet established themselves at Scaribh Sholais. His father was Domhnall Mor. The achievements of the death of Godfrey would form the subject of a great epic.

In 1247, Malachy, or Mac Lochlann O'Donnell, son of Domhnall Mor and brother of Godfrey, was slain by Maurice Fitzgerald in battle at Ballyshannon. The country was then spoiled and plundered by the English and they appointed Roderick O Canannain to the Government of Tir Chonaill. Within a year their covenant with Roderick was violated and Maurice Fitzgerald and the English marched with a great force to Assaroe on the invitation of Godfrey O'Donnell. Roderick opposed them, but he was not sufficiently supported by the people of Tir Chonaill. Obviously the majority of the chiefs regarded Godfrey as the legitimate heir to the chieftaincy, and treated O Canannain as an usurper, but both they and Godfrey were playing into the hand of the wily invader. During the next year Maurice Fitzgerald led his forces into Tir Chonaill, which he plundered and devastated. He banished Roderick O Canannain into Tir Eoghain and left Tir Chonaill in the hands of the great Godfrey.

In 1257, a brilliant battle was fought by Godfrey O'Donnell, now Lord of Tir Chonaill, against Maurice Fitzgerald, now Lord Justice of Ireland, and the English near Sligo Town. A fierce bloody conflict took place. Heroes were disabled and the strength of both sides exhausted. However, Godfrey's men maintained their ground and completely overthrew the English forces, but here unfortunately, Godfrey himself was severely wounded. Having encountered in the fight, Maurice Fitzgerald in single combat in which they desperately wounded each other.

As usual the O'Neills, chieftains of Tir Eoghain, had always taken advantage of the weaknesses of the O'Donnells. Brian O'Neill, Lord of Tir Eoghain, took advantage of the dying Godfrey, and in the month of January 1258 sent a messenger to Godfrey demanding –

1. That Godfrey should personally acknowledge his submission and obedience to Brian and,
2. That the Clan should send him hostages to guarentee what he termed 'the continued obedience'.

However, the dying Godfrey (see ODA No. 10, p. 7) would never submit to these terms and he summoned his entire armies to stand and do battle for the Country he loved so well. They encountered O'Neill's forces near the Swilly and fought each other without respect for friend or relative. In the end O'Neill withdrew acrimonously leaving behind horses and supplies and of course many dead and wounded. As the cry of 'O Domhnaill Abu' was heard over the battle ground, the soul of Godfrey was ascending to the throne of Almighty God, and his body was interred in the sacred ground on which we stand.

N.B. Conwal graveyard is about two miles west of Letterkenny on the Fintown road.

Godfrey O'Donnell's grave at Conwal.

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About 50 more copies are sold in Donegal shops. As only 250 copies of each issue are printed it leaves the price per unit quite expensive so I urge all members to renew their subscription when notified and recruit new members if possible.

If your name and address on the above list is not correct please let me know, and from here on please use Ref. No. given opposite your name.

V. O'Donnell.

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# The Battle of Farsetmore

When Shane O'Neill (the Proud) became Chief of the O'Neills in 1559 he was not content with the Lordship of Tyrone but considered the sovereignty of Ulster his birthright as he claimed descent from the High Kings of Ireland. But before he could assert his dominance, he had many enemies to contend with: members of his own family, neighbouring clans and Queen Elizabeth whose eyes were set on the sovereignty of Ireland.

Shane invaded Tyrconnell in 1557 but O'Donnell had surprised his camp and routed him. Two years later Shane captured Calvagh O'Donnell and his wife Catherine McLean. Calvagh was held prisoner till his release in 1561. After Calvagh's death in 1566 his brother Hugh Dubh succeeded him as Chief of Tyrconnell and one of his first acts was to raid Tyrone. In 1557 he attacked again and ravaged the whole neighbourhood of Strabane.

Shane retaliated. Mustering a large army he marched to the southern shore of the Swilly estuary. Hugh Dubh O'Donnell was at Ardingarry on the other shore with a small body of men. He immediately sent messengers to summon his forces, but by next morning (8th. May,1567) none had arrived when the Tyrone men advanced in squadrons of horse, and battalions of foot, towards Farsetmore which lay below Ardingarry.

The river is tidal for some distance above Farsetmore, but this being the hour of low water O'Neill's army passed over the sandbank without difficulty.

O'Donnell prepared his little force and, taking the footmen himself, made off across flat ground to a position amid bogs where he was secure from attack. He had sent his horsemen under the command of his son Hugh, known as Aodh mac Aodh Dubh of Ramelton, towards the ford to delay O'Neill's progress. Young Hugh attacked the yanguard of O'Neill's cavalry. Many notables fell on each side. But O'Neill was superior in numbers and, noting that his father had reached his objective in the bog, young Hugh rejoined him to await the arrival of their supporters.

Soon they were joined by MacSweeny Doe, later by MacSweeny Fanad and finally, MacSweeny Bannagh. O'Neill by this time had pitched camp to the north of the estuary at Ardingarry. O'Donnell's men, now much reinforced, descended on O'Neill. The latter drew out his force to meet them. Once again, as with so many Irish battles, all detail is lost. Weapons used were: axes, spears, swords, javelins and bows. Gunners were also present. Helmets were worn and round shields were carried.

Horsemen in Irish battles appear to have fought separately from the infantry - as much evidence of class distinction as a matter of tactics - and they fought to the left of the infantry. Mercenary soldiers - Galloglaigh - were not always easy to get and we are told of Shane that "he armeth and weaponeth all the peasants of his country" and that he was the first Irishman to do so. They were called Bonnacht....."Bonnacht and Gallowglass throng from each mountain pass."

The two armies fought for some hours but in the end O'Neill's men began to draw back pursued by O'Donnell. They made for the estuary but by now the tide had risen and the sand was covered. It was a choice of either facing O'Donnell fury or struggle to the safety of the far bank. Many opted for the latter but to their horror found it too deep to wade. 1300 is the estimate of Shane's losses killed or drowned. The Tyrconnell men had the spoils of victory - horses, arms and military equipment. Shane escaped along the north side of the river, crossed the river near Scairbh Sholais and made his way back to Tyrone. It was to be his last battle. No sooner did he arrive home than he received news of the Lord Deputy advancing against him at the head of a powerful army. Shane fled to the MacDonalds of Antrim and sought their aid, but they hadn't forgotten the past and the result was that Shane's head was severed and delivered to Dublin Castle where it was exhibited over the main gateway.

The remains of those who died at Fearsetmore were buried in Conwal graveyard along with Godfrey O'Donnell who was buried there three hundred years earlier as was so well told by Patsy O'Donnell at the Clan Gathering last June.

(Farsetmore is the Gaelic for Big Ford)

Sources: "Irish Battles" by Hayes-McCoy.
Annals of the Four Masters.

V.O'Donnell.